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THE NEW FACE OF TERRORISM
REPORT FROM THE ROUNDTABLE

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Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development

October 26, 2001

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THE NEW FACE OF TERRORISM
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October 26, 2001
Ottawa, Ontario

The Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development organised and hosted a Roundtable on ***The New Face of Terrorism*** *on October 26, 2001. Experts on intelligence and security issues and government officials met in Ottawa to address long-term policy implications of the September 11 attacks on the United States and new trends in international relations. Among the participants were Wesley Wark (University of Toronto), Thomas Badey (Randolph-Macon College), Jocelyn Coulon (Lester B. Pearson Canadian International Peacekeeping Training Centre), John Higginbotham (Assistant Deputy Minister, Communications, Culture and Policy Planning, DFAIT), Peter Jones (Department of National Defence), Bill Galbraith (Office of the Solicitor General), Paul Taillon (Canadian Security Intelligence Service) and Russel Wiseman (RCMP). Steven Lee (Executive Director, Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development, DFAIT) chaired the meeting. The Roundtable launched a series of discussions which will take place in the next two months. Topics will include:*

- *Security Challenges: Implications for the Economy and Sovereignty,*
- *World Population and Migration Trends,*
- *The New Face of Globalisation (Clash of Civilisations?), and*
- *Open Society and National Security.*

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This report is divided into 7 parts:

1. Historical Perspectives
2. Challenges for Canada after September 11
3. Defining Terrorism
4. The New Face of Terrorism
5. The Implications of Responses to Terrorism for International Relations
6. The Impact of Terrorism on Peacekeeping
7. Summary of Policy Options

1. Historical Perspectives

Canada's experience with espionage and intelligence originated during the Second World War.

After the war ended, Canada had to grapple with the question of what kind and how much intelligence capacity should be developed to ensure the security of Canadians and to enable the Canadian government to play a role in international affairs. This was resolved in favour of developing a relatively small, invisible intelligence capacity (with an element of foreign intelligence and strategic assessment capabilities). It was decided that Canada would not get involved in systematic foreign intelligence gathering using human resources. Instead, Canadian intelligence would take the form of loose coordination among government departments. Intelligence would, therefore, play a peripheral role in decision making.

The nature of the security intelligence services changed at the end of the Cold War. The mandate to combat (the spread of) Communism was replaced by efforts to counter terrorism. It was assumed that terrorism did not pose a direct threat to Canada's national security. The Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) described Canada's counter-terrorism efforts as an insurance policy.

Canada has had other experiences/debates with intelligence and related security issues especially in the aftermath of the October crisis in 1970. That event had immediate broad policy ramifications, including the decision to invoke the War Measures Act and suspend basic individual liberties. While the crisis was domestically generated, there may be some valuable lessons to draw on in the present context.

2. Challenges for Canada after September 11

"The war on terrorism is going to be intelligence driven and depend on intelligence capacity."

September 11 changed the modest approach Canada adopted toward security intelligence after the Second World War. Today, Canadians face a renewed debate about intelligence, including:

- the organisation and structure of the intelligence establishment (methods),
- the need for systematic foreign intelligence,
- the need to improve assessment capabilities,
- the need for better reporting and analysis,
- the role of international organisations and allies.

A new framework is required for intelligence gathering and assessment, using a different set of categories, and tools (i.e., statistics on threats to global security, economic data, etc.). New questions emerge as we attempt to orient ourselves in the post-September 11 environment: What are the connections between terrorist groups/movements and government structures? How can these connections be severed? Why and to what extent do terrorist groups/movements have popular support? What are the roots of anti-Western and anti-U.S. feelings in the developing world? What can we do to mute these feelings? What have we learned from past nation-building efforts?

This discussion should occur within two contexts:

- **First, we must decide what role Canada should play as a Coalition partner in the war against terrorism in the longer term.** How much "made in Canada intelligence" do we require in order to fulfill this role? Continuing to play an active role within the Coalition, or even staying at the "intelligence table" as a valued partner, poses a huge challenge for Canada at the present. Nonetheless, staying at the table is crucial because Canada relies heavily on the Coalition partners' intelligence. "Ally worthiness" may require Canada to develop a geographical niche.

- **Second, the current debate is being framed in a time of crisis.** Therefore, our analysis and policy options are based on a worst-case scenario. It is important to keep an historical perspective in order to develop good policies. For instance, Canada would likely not want to develop a capacity to conduct intelligence gathering within a worst-case framework. Developing a closer partnership with the U.S. on security and intelligence will be necessary and may become uncomfortable. Longer term thinking about the place of Canada within North America is needed.

Some participants raised caution about homogenising intelligence gathering and assessment with Coalition partners. They recommended that Canada develop its own capacity, taking stock of Canada's unique interests. **Others suggested that Canada develop preventive intelligence gathering since such data could contribute to strengthening global security, peace and prosperity rather than a narrow national interest.** A case was made against geographical or technological specialisation since it could lead to a disconnect between the intelligence community and the political process.

Intelligence gathering (and other activities) could be:
1. reactive,
2. preemptive,
3. preventive.

Participants addressed the tendency to simplify complex realities and polarise diverse views as the war on terrorism continues. This tendency is apparent in the statements of leaders and the media (in the West and the Middle East alike) and is often accompanied by a sense of political correctness (i.e., some views are considered inappropriate). **Canada should not be eager to appease its allies at the cost of losing its multicultural and open society character.** For instance, Canada could contribute to addressing the roots of terrorism beyond military action. Domestically, Canadians should ensure that the efforts at making intelligence security services more effective do not impinge on individual rights and freedoms.

Others said that the chances of creating a mythical Orwellian environment of repression and fear by strengthening Canada's intelligence capacity are small to nil. Gathering intelligence should be perceived as generating knowledge in order to understand the complex realities and views around the world. "The opposite of intelligence is ignorance." Ignorance is more likely to lead to bad policy (including discriminatory policies aimed at Canadians of Middle Eastern descent) than knowledge. One should also keep in mind, throughout Canadian history, that the balance has always been tipped in favour of legality rather than efficacy. The September 11 events simply

demonstrated the need for a better balance. Canada has adequate resources to develop intelligence capacity, including advanced technology and a multicultural, cosmopolitan and outward-looking society.

Many participants agreed that the debate surrounding Canada's intelligence should be public and engage Parliament in particular. Attention was drawn to the McDonald Commission Report (1981).[1] The Report was a culmination of a comprehensive public debate during which Canadians addressed the fundamental balance between the needs of the state to protect itself and maintain its democratic (open society) nature. A point was made that Canada lacks an "intelligence culture" and a debate on intelligence/security issues will be difficult to sustain once the present crisis subsides.

Coping with terrorism in a cosmopolitan society was also addressed. A point was made that the (necessary) sensitivity most Canadians have developed toward a candid discussion of cultural vulnerabilities inside some domestic ethno-cultural communities may have hindered a critical analysis of potential criminal or political threats originating within these communities. For instance, this sensitivity has prevented attention to the high rate of divorce and family disintegration in some communities. Both are among the key determinants of susceptibility to participate in violence and crime. One participant claimed that there are many other examples where cultural sensitivities and the fear of being labelled a racist prevented adequate analysis, investigation, reporting and resolution of problems/conflicts.

A suggestion was made that there is a need for advance work by Canadian intelligence and police. Moreover, "CSIS and the RCMP require resources to continually develop and cultivate contacts inside Canadian cultural communities that are drawn from societies where insurgent or organized criminal societies operate." Good intelligence may actually prevent "targeting" of entire ethnic groups in a time of crisis.

3. Defining Terrorism

The current debate lacks a common definition of terrorism. A neutral definition of terrorism is required in order to established a taxonomy. Moreover, a definition acceptable to a larger group of nations is necessary so that international agreement on issues like the instruments for combatting terrorism can be reached. The definition should include elements on which states could minimally agree:

- **Repetition** - terrorism is the repeated, systematic exploitation of fear rather than an isolated act of violence.

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[1]The McDonald Commission was created in 1977 after it became public that the Security Service of the RCMP may have been involved in illegal or improper activities.

- **Motivation** - the over-riding purpose of almost all international terrorism is political. Religion, ethnicity, economic conditions and other frequently stated reasons for terrorism are instruments for political objectives.
- **Intent** - terrorists use fear to provoke responses. While the creation of fear and anxiety is a byproduct of all violence, it is not the primary intent of most terrorists.
- **Actors** - international terrorism occurs at all levels of organisation. From a definitional perspective, the term non-state actors seems to be the most effective in capturing the majority of those groups/individuals who perpetrate terrorist acts.
- **Effect** - to merit the label "international terrorism" the activities of terrorists must affect more than one state. [2]

Debate on defining terrorism developed around three main issues:

- **Context for defining terrorism** – attempts to define terrorism are largely confined to the Western, liberal, industrial societies, which in turn apply their concepts to situations in the developing world.

- **The current definitions largely miss the "soft" aspects of terrorism** – terrorist activity is on a continuum of actions, beginning with activism. This definitional shortcoming precludes the development of strategies aimed at addressing the grievances of groups/movements before they feel compelled to use violence. For instance, addressing grievances of anti-globalisation protestors may have prevented the violence witnessed in Quebec City, Genoa and other places.

- **Actors and motivation** – some participants pointed out that while the use of violence on the part of non-state actors is considered terrorism, the use of violence by states is legal. In this context it is necessary to consider activities by non-state groups/movements that resort to using violence in support of legitimate causes, including freedom fighting against an oppressive regime. One may also compare such an activity with state-based efforts (authoritarian in origin or not) to consolidate national power (nation-building). The definition outlined above does not capture such important nuances in motivations of both state and non-state actors, while favouring the former by default.

Some participants drew attention to the present debate in the House of Commons on Bill C-36 (The Anti-terrorism Act). The definition of terrorism in that Bill invokes ten different international conventions and has been a point of considerable contention inside and outside the House. For instance, the language used in the Bill treats human life as an equivalent to an essential service or property.

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[2]For a more detailed discussion, see Thomas Badey, "Defining International Terrorism: A Pragmatic Approach," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 10, No. 1 (Spring 1998), 96.

A suggestion was made that Canada could help forge an international political consensus on a definition of terrorism.

4. The New Face of Terrorism

Key characteristics of the September 11 attacks:

- The attacks were immensely successful in creating fear in North America.
- The terrorists may not have had any definite aims beyond creating fear and disruption. The objective was to create a context in which to fight for specific ends (i.e., pitting the U.S. against the Muslim world).
- Terrorism is usually a weapon of weak groups already losing support and fearing marginalisation. The Coalition should ensure that this is true for the September 11 terrorists.
- The attack combined high-tech and low-tech methods/weapons.

Debate developed around characterising the attack as "right wing." Some participants pointed out that the Western notion of political right and left may not apply to the political realities of the Middle East. Others insisted that the attacks were driven by xenophobia and "ethnic" hatred toward a particular group of people (i.e., the Americans) – elements associated throughout history to right wing ideologies.

A point was made that terrorism is an orphan in social sciences. While operations analyses are good, terrorism is not framed in a larger structure of interpretation to aid responses and policy development. This reality transforms terrorism into an unpredictable, unprecedented, catastrophic, and omnipresent form of violence. **A framework could be developed by linking the analysis of terrorism to broader trends in international relations around the globe.** Such a framework could provide a way to understand events and anticipate how actors might behave.

One of the defining trends of international relations is undoubtedly globalisation. **Globalisation creates a context in which transnational ideologies and organisations (as well as new technologies) greatly extend the reach of organised violence.** As the control and influence of states decline, the opportunities for terrorist activities flourish. Moreover, the "borderless" aspect of contemporary terrorism facilitates the targeting of specific publics and structures. Aided by trans-nationalised communication, ideologies, migration and exchange, terrorism involves a "global struggle for hearts and minds." The terrorist acts aim to evoke an emotional-moral response. Meanwhile, global communication enhances terrorist impact. The bombing of Afghanistan entails the risk of outlasting the sympathy and support generated by the attacks on the United States and should not last longer than absolutely needed.

The new face of terrorism poses considerable challenges for policy makers including the difficulty of fighting a non-state actor which is not readily identifiable, does not use predictable weapons in defence of a territory, and does not have a fixed address. **The challenge is compounded by the distinct possibility of new attacks.**

Some participants suggested that we know very little about our enemy and our enemy likely knows very little about the West. Others said that, on the contrary, the terrorists who perpetrated the September 11 attacks knew a great deal about the West. The impact of the attacks was devastating precisely because the terrorists knew when to strike (i.e., a workday morning, perfect weather conditions), how to strike (i.e., collapsing the two World Trade Centre towers) and how to create an instant media frenzy. The attack had a significant psychological aspect/impact and inflicted high loss of human life and material damage at a relatively low cost. It is estimated that the entire operation cost the terrorists between $200 000 and $250 000 (U.S.). The damage for the U.S. has been estimated between $30 and $50 billion (U.S.) with insurance cost between $2 and $5 billion (U.S.). The U.S. economy has been seriously shaken. A suggestion was made that Canada address the psychological aspect of the war on terrorism by building mosques in the Middle East or by reinforcing humanitarian assistance, for instance.

The link between terrorism and organised crime in the post-Cold War environment was raised. A point was made that while organised crime perpetuates violence for private gain, terrorists act in what they consider to be a "public good."

Participants also discussed future trends in chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear terrorism (CBRN) and the potential for terrorist organisations to acquire "weapons of mass destruction" (WMD). While the world may have changed on September 11 in certain respects it remained the same in others. On the one hand, the series of terrorist attacks caused mass casualties and revealed a total failure of intelligence. On the other hand, the perpetrators did not use any CBRN weapons. (The anthrax scares in the U.S. can likely be attributed to the work of domestic terrorists or criminal groups.) **Specialists have observed that while terrorists are increasingly interested in mass-casualty attacks, for which WMD could be well suited, they continue using conventional weaponry in their attacks.** There are several reasons for this trend including:

- A lack of technical abilities or lack of capacity to acquire and use WMD.
- The undependable, unpredictable, and often uncontrollable nature of biological and chemical weapons.
- The desire of terrorists to do visible/symbolic damage. (The effect of killing people by attacking the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon – symbols of the U.S. economy and military power, was tremendous, it is doubtful such an effect could be created using biological or chemical weapons).
- Public opinion - killing many thousands of people might not be consistent with the terrorists' perceptions of themselves as liberators or freedom fighters.

The combination of practical and strategic obstacles could make the road to CBRN capabilities long and cumbersome for the terrorists. However, several factors including the potential impact of these weapons and the growing interest of terrorists in inflicting massive casualties warrant attention of policy makers and scholars alike.

A question was raised whether there exists deterrence to the new technology and techniques

terrorists have been using.

5. The Implications of Responses to Terrorism for International Relations

The response to terrorism after September 11 may be very significant for International Relations in the long term. The early trends include:

- **Rediscovery of multilateralism** – before September 11, the U.S. administration exercised unilateral (some would even say isolationist) policies. Since the terrorist attacks, the administration has been compelled toward coalition building. The Coalition is critical for the war on terrorism for two main reasons. First, the multilateral framework legitimises the war. Second, the coalition partners provide the U.S. with crucial intelligence input. Multilateralism has also placed limits on U.S. action. The presence of non-western states within the coalition has brought some restraint to the war on terrorism in the Middle East. The question remains how long will the Coalition last.

- **Rediscovery of the public sector** – before September 11, the U.S. administration had a neoliberal, almost anti-government approach to governance. Now, there has been a shift in who guides the U.S. economy from Alan Greenspan to the White House, with the recognition that the private sector has no capacity to stand up to terrorism. In order to fight terrorism effectively, the U.S. administration has to increasingly rely on a range of government departments. Furthermore, it is faced with rebuilding the health care system.

In a larger context, globalisation related disorders, including terrorism, can be effectively addressed by strong state institutions. In this sense, a borderless, unpredictable act, perpetrated by non-state actors has contributed to the reconstitution of the state. The fundamental definition of the state, as having a monopoly over the legitimate use of force, has been reasserted.

Some participants pointed out that the new role of multilateralism in international relations has been overstated. The U.S. can still easily opt out of the Coalition and act unilaterally when faced with inconveniences (including the Anti Ballistic Missile Treaty). Others said that unilateralism is not an option and the U.S. administration is well aware it will fail should it attempt to combat terrorism on its own.

Questions were also raised about the relationship between the Coalition, led by the U.S., and other countries including: Iran (which not only shares a long border with Afghanistan but has vested interests in the outcome of the U.S. military action there) and India (which replaced Pakistan as "the" friend of the U.S. in South Asia). The value of a solid partnership with Russia should not be underestimated. How unified is the Coalition and how long can it last? Many participants pointed out that the support of coalition partners from the Middle East will wane as the bombing continues (especially during Ramadan) and internal opposition to the alliance with the West, and the U.S. in particular, grows. **Canada could play a diplomatic role in ensuring**

that the concerns and needs of the Muslim coalition countries are addressed.

A point was made that immediate goals cannot be achieved without winning the larger "game." **It is unlikely that terrorism will be defeated while conditions in which it flourishes continue to exist.** Peace in the Middle East (particularly addressing the Palestinian – Israeli conflict), nation-building in failed states, maintaining broad-based coalitions – should all be among our collective goals. Some participants argued that such a challenge may prove difficult to meet since the U.S. administration does not seem to have clear objectives. (Is the objective of the military action in Afghanistan to catch Osama bin Laden or to topple the Taliban regime? In case the Taliban regime is toppled, what will replace it?) **Canada could contribute advice on post-Taliban scenarios, for instance.**[3]

6. The Impact of Terrorism on Peacekeeping

The impact of terrorism on Peacekeeping is especially important for Canada. Canadian Peacekeepers have already been the victims of terrorist and controlled attacks around the world. What happens after such attacks is now crucial. At the moment, the tendency is to re-assert national control of Peacekeeping which can break down International Coalitions. This, in turn, undermines the fundamentals of Peacekeeping: neutrality, objectivity, and an intermediary role.

The UN has a responsibility to protect its peacekeepers. **It is important that all nations strive to take part in Peacekeeping and, at the same time, that measures be designed to protect peacekeepers.**

- Step 1 - education, orientation, and training to deal with terrorism.
- Step 2 - the UN to create a counter-terrorism force.
- Step 3 - each UNPKF to include a counter-terrorist component.

In Afghanistan the challenge for Peacekeeping will not be post-terrorism, because terrorism there will not disappear, but addressing post-Taliban challenges (including nation-building).

Some participants pointed to the uneven level of training and the diverse value systems of national troops within an international Peacekeeping mission. The divergence between the UN rules of engagement and domestic laws was also raised. Both make successful Peacekeeping operations challenging.

7. Summary of Policy Options

- The trajectory of North American security policy over the past twenty years is in

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[3]See Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development, *Summary Report from the Roundtable on Afghanistan: Governance Scenarios and Canadian Policy Options* (Ottawa, Ontario: 12 October 2001), No. 5015.1E.

question. Instead of deregulation, governments should reinforce training and equipping professional air security personnel. Rather than privatising transport, governments should actively guarantee public safety.

- The success of the anti-terrorism struggle will depend on the identification and handling of new issues including:
  - defining terrorism (Canada may draw some lessons from European cases: the U.K. legislation - April 2000, the Penal Code of France, the European Union Declaration - 19 October 2001),
  - supporting the U.S.,
  - strengthening international counter-terrorist cooperation,
  - providing humanitarian aid to the Afghans.

- One of our priorities should be assisting civil society in the Muslim world, and especially in Afghanistan, so conditions for peace are created. Canada could contribute advice on post-Taliban scenarios, for instance.

- We should remember that refugees are victims of terrorism and need assistance. Any draft comprehensive anti-terrorist treaty must not link refugees to terrorism.

- Canada could develop "preventive" intelligence gathering (such data could contribute to strengthening global security, peace and prosperity).

- Canada could help forge an international political consensus on a definition of terrorism.

- Canada could play a diplomatic role in ensuring that the concerns and needs of the Muslim Coalition partners are addressed.

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